

GATOR BOWL VICTORY ISSUE

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ALSO INSIDE

FOOTBALL REWIND
LSU VICTORY
COACH CHILDRESS
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CULLEN GILLASPIA BECOMES THE FIRST 12TH MAN
TO SCORE A TOUCHDOWN!



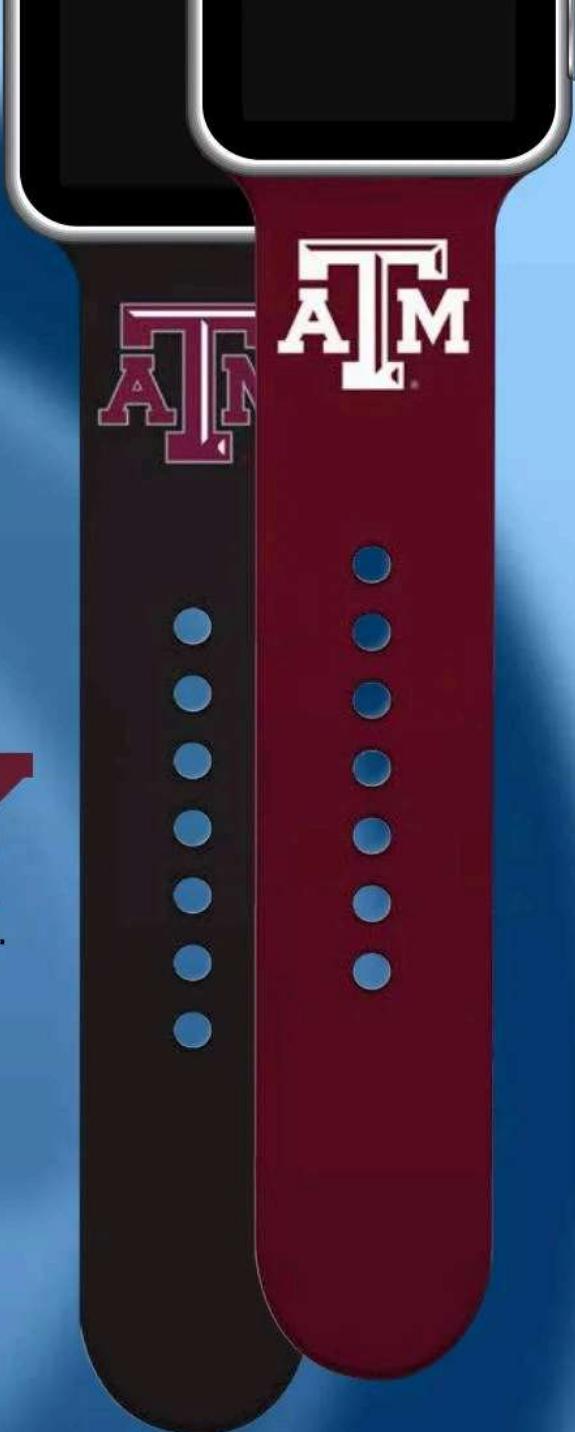
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On the Cover: Cullen Gillaspia bulldozes his way into the end zone to score the first ever touchdown for a 12th Man.
Photo by Rob Havens '88

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Howdy Ags!

There is nothing like starting off the New Year with a big Aggie Gator Bowl win over NC State in Florida. Taking pictures of all the players celebrating in the middle of the Jacksonville Jaguars field was an amazing experience. The team sent the seniors off with a dominating victory over a really good club.

One of the best things about earning a bowl bid is that you get to have 15 practices leading up to the bowl. It's obvious, and not surprising, that Jimbo used those practices to make this team better. Our young players got more work and players that are fighting for starting spots were able to showcase their skills.

Jimbo talked about dominating an opponent and having that killer instinct and the players put together a well-rounded performance. They had a great game on both sides of the ball and in special teams. They put their foot on the Wolf Pack' necks and played from start to finish.

Jimbo talked about building a program and starting it on a great foundation. Many experts were shocked to see him turn around this program so quickly but for those of us that got to see it up close during his first spring camp, we are not surprised at all.

Normally when you hear someone talk about this team needs to be tougher it sounds like coach-speak. But from the day the Aggies took the field, it was apparent it was going to be different.

Our players deserve a ton of credit for buying in and being willing to change. They were held accountable for everything they did, and while they could have easily become jaded or quit, they stuck through it and became a different team.

We are still in the toughest division in college football but I am convinced Jimbo will lead this program to a national championship one day. I don't know how soon it will happen but this program is definitely in the right hands!

Gig'em Ags!

Rob '88



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Aggieland Illustrated is an independently owned, Aggie owned and operated publication and in no way reflects the views or opinions of Texas A&M University.

Aggieland Illustrated (ISSN 1932-9105) is published six times a year in the United States by Aggieland Illustrated, PO Box 6841, Bryan, TX 77805-6841. Reproduction or use of editorial or graphics content in any manner without permission is prohibited. Photographs and manuscripts for publication are welcome but will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Address all subscription inquiries and change of address requests to Aggieland Illustrated, PO Box 6841, Bryan, TX 77805-6841. Allow up to eight weeks for response.

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Volume 13, Number 3

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coming home...

Thousands came out to pay their last respects as George H.W. Bush's remains were carried by funeral train #4141 back to Aggieland. It was the first presidential funeral train journey since Dwight D. Eisenhower's remains went from Washington to his native Kansas 49 years ago. A special train fitted with clear sides allowed young and old to catch a glimpse of the former president's casket draped with an American Flag and guarded by a military member in full dress uniform.

Photos by Rob Havens '88









senior stretch...

Graduate transfer Christian Mekowulu shoots over the outstretched arms of Arkansas defender Adriio Bailey in the Aggies conference opening contest vs Arkansas. The 6'8 forward from Lagos, Nigeria has given Billy Kennedy an experienced big man inside for rebounding and defense. He also proved he can score when he went eight of nine from the field for 20 points in a win over Valpo. Photo by Rob Havens '88

snapshot



opening holes...

The offensive line gave Trayveon Williams a path to the end zone and the talented back did not disappoint, as he broke a tackle and scored a touchdown. He carried the ball 35 times for 198 yards and scored two touchdowns in the contest. The Aggies beat LSU 74-72 in the historic seven-overtime game.
Photos by Rob Havens '88





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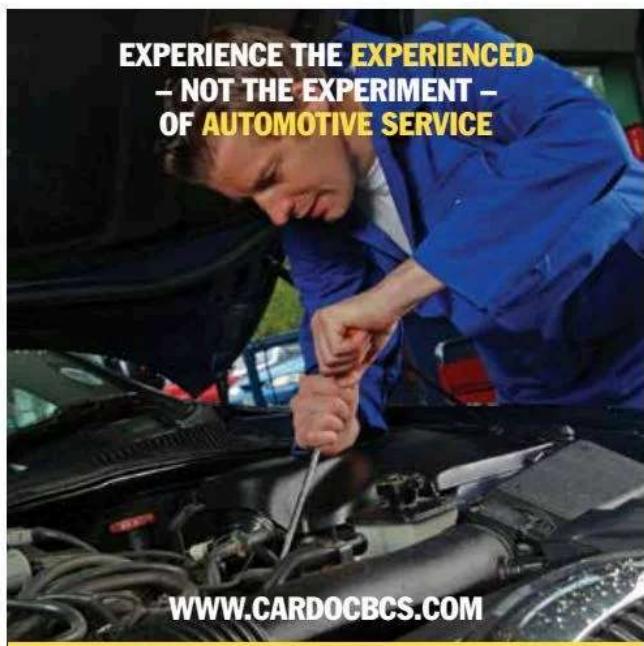
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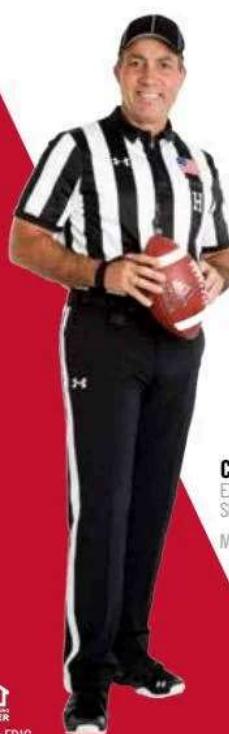
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ON WINNING THE GATOR BOWL!**

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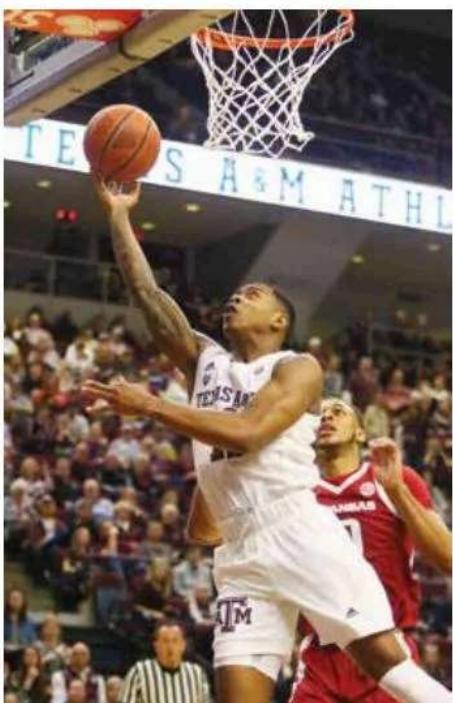
scoreboard



[SWIMMING & DIVING] The women's team has dominated in the pool, crushing the competition and opening the season with a 5-1 record. Currently ranked #8 in the nation they swept all 14 races against SMU in the first meet of the spring. Haley Yelle and Sydney Pickrem led the team as both swimmers picked up two wins a piece in the meet versus the former SWC rival. The men's team is 3-3 so far but they have won three of their last four meets. The highlight of the fall was the defeat of #11 Louisville by the score of 190-162. They have two more meets before the SEC Championships.



[MEN'S BASKETBALL] The loss of Admon Gilder has been a devastating blow to this year's team. Wendell Mitchell was sidelined with tendonitis and missed valuable preparation time early in the season. As a result, the Aggies have struggled to find a new identity with the young lineup. At midway through the season, the Aggies are 7-7 but hope to gain some momentum from a big last-second win over Alabama in Tuscaloosa. TJ Starks threw up a three-pointer with time running out that bounced off the glass and went in to give the Ags a one-point win. The Aggies had only three turnovers in the game. If they can continue to play that way, they hope to turn the season around.



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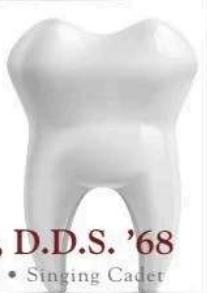
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scoreboard



[WOMEN'S BASKETBALL] With only one returning starter from last year's team, Coach Blair has led his squad to a 13-4 start. Chennedy Carter is one of the best players in the country and Blair is working hard to put together the right pieces for this team to make a run in the post-season tournament. Unfortunately, Aaliyah Wilson who he called "the biggest surprise player in the conference" suffered a season-ending knee injury so transfer Shambria Washington will have to step up and fill the void of Wilson's departure. Ciera Johnson, Kayla Wells and N'dea Jones have been solid contributors for the Aggies.

[TRACK & FIELD] The men and women's teams swept victories as they hosted the Ted Nelson Invitational. The men dominated the field scoring 164 points to beat Baylor (83), UT Arlington (81), UTSA 9750 and Texas (68). Jacob Wooten won the pole vault event and Hannah Campbell won the mile to generate winning points for the men's team. Competing for the first time in the maroon and white, Tahar Triki won the long jump. On the women's side, the Aggies won the 4X400 relay by clocking a 3:36.37 to beat Texas and Baylor. LaJavia Brown won the triple jump and Alstian Walker won the high jump.



FOOTBALL REWIND

GAME 9

24 | **A&M**
28 | **AUBURN**

Texas A&M arrived at Auburn after the loss to Mississippi State needing a win to avoid the late-season skid that the program had experienced the last few years under the previous regime. The Aggies were able to move the ball in a back and forth contest that the Aggies led 17-14 at the half. To open the second half, the Aggies drove down the field thanks to a 42-yard reception by Jace Sternberger. Trayveon Williams finished off the drive with a touchdown and the Ags were in control 24-14. Almost midway through the fourth quarter with the victory in sight Kellen Mond was intercepted and the Tigers took over from their own 29. The defense had held Jarrett Stidham in check for the majority of the game but he was able to turn the game around on an eight-play drive that resulted in a touchdown that drew the Tigers within three points 24-21. The Auburn defense stopped the Aggies on the ensuing drive setting up the game-winning drive. The Tigers took just two plays to go 58 yards for the game-winning score. The Aggies failed on their final drive and suffered a 28-24 loss.



GAME 10

24 | **OLE MISS**
38 | **A&M**

After a two-game skid on the road, the Aggies were more than happy to return to College Station. The Rebels had given the Aggies fits over the years and with nothing to play for because of NCAA penalties it seemed to be the perfect time for the Ags to get back on track. But the Rebels came out hard and were driving for a score that would have given them a 21-7 lead. The Aggie defense forced only the second fumble of the year inside our own red zone. Kellen Mond and the Aggie offense took advantage and drove the length of the field, tying up the game with a Mond to Davis reception that changed the complexion of the contest. Trayveon Williams carried the ball 31 times during the game and gained 228 yards. Mond threw three touchdowns and added another on the ground. With the Aggies clinging to just a three-point lead in the fourth, Ole Miss prepared for a chip shot field goal. Coach Fisher called timeout freezing the kicker who subsequently missed and the Aggies took advantage of it. They drove 80 yards extending their lead to ten on another Mond to Davis connection. The Rebels kicked a field goal and then attempted an onside kick. But the Aggies recovered and then Trayveon Williams sealed the victory with a 46-yard touchdown run, giving the Ags a 38-24 win!



vs.



GAME 11

**20
41** | **UAB
A&M**

At the beginning of the year, this game looked like more of a bye game than anything. UAB was in only their second season removed from not having a football program. But the Blazers came into Kyle with an eight-game winning streak and a #25 ranking. The Aggies did not take them lightly and had a dominating performance jumping out to a 34-7 lead heading into the fourth quarter. Trayveon Williams had another stellar performance, rushing for 167 yards and two touchdowns. Kellen Mond added 192 yards through the air and 38 on the ground. Jace Sternberger had four catches for 85 yards and two touchdowns. The Aggie defense also created some turnovers as Donovan Wilson and Deshawn Capers-Smith both got interceptions. The special teams unit got the evening going as they forced a fumble on the opening kickoff and Larry Pryor returned it 17 yards for a touchdown giving the Aggies a 7-0 lead only nine seconds into the game. Braden Mann hit his 14th punt of 60-or-more yards giving him sole possession of the NCAA record for 60-yard punts in a season. The victory gave the Aggies their seventh win and some momentum heading into the LSU game.



GAME 12

72
74

LSU
A&M

Have you ever been watching something that seemed so surreal that you thought you were either dreaming or watching a movie play out? As the Aggies took over the ball with 1:29 left in regulation against the #7 LSU Tigers on Saturday night November 24th, that is exactly how I felt.

The Aggies had been in control of the contest on both sides of the ball until a fumble was scooped up and returned 58 yards for a touchdown and the momentum of the entire game was changed. The Tigers had trailed 24-17 and the Aggies were driving for a score that would seal the game. But, in an instant, that all would change.

Suddenly LSU had new life and they were able to stop the Aggies on the ensuing drive and then convert a 76-yard drive of their own to take a seven-point lead. For Aggie fans, this scenario has become all too familiar, as we have watched this program falter during big games unable to recover from momentum swings late in games.

The Tigers took possession with 2:32 left in the game and needed just one first down to seal the victory. But as Jimbo Fisher promised back during spring ball, "It ain't gonna be like it used to be!"

The Aggie defense took the field and stopped the Tigers on three consecutive plays forcing a punt that the Aggies fielded on their own 22-yard line. With just 1:29 remaining and no timeouts, the Aggies had to score a touchdown to extend the game.

Up to that point, Kellen Mond had managed the game but had not been asked to take over and win it. As the sophomore QB took the field, all of that

(cont.)



LSU vs. **ATM**

was about to change. He dissected the Tiger defense and made play after play through the air chewing up yards and finding his favorite target on the drive, Quartney Davis.

On second and ten from the 47-yard line, Mond misplayed the snap and went down to a knee to recover, he got up and was hit as he threw, sailing the ball downfield into the hands of an LSU defender. The crowd exhaled and moaned believing the Ags had faltered again, while the Tigers doused Ed Orgeron with a cooler of Gatorade in celebration. But after video review the referee said Mond was down, giving the Aggies new life.

Kellen completed two more passes to Davis and Kendrick Rogers and then spiked the ball to kill the clock one last time. The clock rolled to 0:00 and the Aggie bench pleaded with the refs to review the last play. After the review, one second was placed back on the clock.

The next play reminded me of the slow-motion scene at the end of Rocky 2 as Apollo Creed and Rocky both fall to the mat and struggle to get up as the ref counts to ten. Finally Rocky stands up with one second to become the World Champion.

101,501 fans at Kyle all stood to their feet and held their breath as the final play of regulation went down. Kellen took the snap, dropped back to pass and then threaded the needle to Davis, as he sailed through the air between two defenders to collect the miraculous score. Kyle Field erupted as the Aggies tied the game.

The Aggie defense held strong in overtime number one, forcing the Tigers to hit a 50-yard field goal on their first possession. The Aggies got all the way to the one but had to settle for a three of their own after the Tigers dropped Williams and Mond for losses.

In the second overtime, Williams 17-yard gallop set up a three-yard rushing TD by Mond to give the Aggies a 7-point lead. The Tigers responded with a 3-yard rushing touchdown of their own on fourth down to extend the game.

In the third stanza, LSU made quick work of the Aggies by completing a 25-yard touchdown pass by Burrow to Dee Anderson. They added a two-point conversion to increase their lead to eight. The Aggies responded when Kendrick Rogers elevated and brought down a one-handed miraculous catch from 25 yards out to bring the Ags within two. Mond found Rogers again for the conversion pushing the game to a fourth overtime.

The Aggies had to settle for a Seth Small 21-yard field goal in the fourth but the Aggie defense held strong forcing LSU to kick one of their own from 26 yards out.

The Tigers used some trick oration in the next overtime as running back C. Ed. Helaire took the ball and faked the run before lofting a touchdown pass to Carter in the end zone. They failed on their conversion opening a window for the Aggie offense.

The Aggies were pushed to the limit in the fifth OT and faced a fourth down from the six-yard line. Mond scrambled and found the outstretched hands of Rogers on the right side of the end zone to tie the game once more. The Aggies could not convert the two-point conversion and the game went to a sixth period of overtime.

Kellen Mond put the Aggies back on top quickly as he found tight end Jace Sternberger on a wheel route, throwing the perfect pass for an easy six points. Mond found Rogers once again for the two-point conversion that gave the Ags an eight-point cushion.

On their next possession, Burrow used his legs on first and



goal from the four and scored another touchdown. Then he found Dee Anderson again adding two more to their total.

The back and forth contest went to the historic seventh overtime and the Tigers had the ball first. The players were exhausted but the Aggies would not quit. They made play after play willing themselves to win.

Once again the Tigers scored a touchdown as Burrow found a crease in the Aggie defense and rushed for a ten-yard score. On the ensuing conversion attempt, Landis Durham got a hand on the pass, knocking it up in the air and it was corralled by a Tiger receiver who was pulled to the ground by Keldrick Carper before crossing the goal line, setting up the final period.

Trayveon Williams, who had been a workhorse throughout the game, generating close to 200 yards, got the Aggies going with a thirteen-yard run. On third and fifteen, Mond found Quartney Davis one last time, hitting him in stride as he crossed the goal line.

With the game on the line and the 12th Man holding their breath, Mond scrambled and then found Kendrick Rogers in the back of the end zone for the winning two-point conversion.

Kyle Field erupted as the players raced across the field and the 12th Man crossed over the walls and rushed to celebrate with them. The Tigers had beaten the Aggies in the previous seven games and our team rejoiced after finally defeating their arch nemesis.

As I looked around and saw the field packed with students sawing varsities horns off, it seemed like a dream. Did this really just happen? From one second to defeat through seven crazy overtimes, we finally did it. Just like Rocky held the championship belt over his head and yelled "Yo Adrian, I did it!" The Aggies can finally say the same thing "Yo Aggies, We Did It!!!!" Jimbo was right, It ain't like it used to be!





[GAME 13: NC STATE 13, A&M 52]

GATOR BOWL

AGGIES SEND OFF SENIORS WITH GATOR BOWL WIN



With the creation of the College Football Playoff, many experts question the life expectancy of the other bowl games. It seems like every year there is a team that falls short of their goal and winds up in a lesser bowl. Not motivated to be there, they wind up laying an egg, as Georgia showed us this year versus tu. Now that apathy towards playing in a lesser bowl has moved from the teams to the student-athletes who are making the decision to sit out and not risk injury so they can prepare themselves for the NFL Draft.

Fortunately for Texas A&M we have not seen one of our players make the decision to skip the game to protect their own interest. In fact, Myles Garrett, who would wind up being the number one pick in the draft, said it was never an option for him to leave



his teammates high and dry without him, to protect his draft stock.

In my opinion, that just shows the class of the players who proudly wear the maroon and white. While few commentators have had the guts to say it, skipping the bowl game to protect their draft status is selfish and a character flaw.

We continue to remind ourselves of the statement Coach Fisher said back in the spring that, "Things are not gonna be how they use to be!" I was reminded of this as I watched our players go through warm-up drills before the Gator Bowl.

Last year as I shot pregame pictures at the Belk Bowl, I watched as our players danced around to the music and walked through their drills. I remember a fellow media member saying to me, "Well if we can't beat them on the field, we can sure out-dance them!"

From behind the goal line of the Gator Bowl, I watched our offensive linemen as they lathered up a full on sweat before the contest. In fact, I was concerned they would be too tired when they hit the field. It was very clear they were there to win.

The Aggies were coming off one of the biggest wins in the last decade as they came back and defeated LSU in the seven-overtime game. A victory over NC State would give the Aggies a nine-win season for the first time since 2013. It would help continue the momentum our team started in November and propel us into the 2019 season.

The win over the Tigers had earned the Aggies a Florida Bowl for the first time since 1957. In the past, we would hear things like, "The bowl game is a reward for the players." Make no mistake, this was a work trip for Jimbo Fisher and the Aggies and they were not going to allow these seniors to go winless in bowl games over the course of their collegiate careers.

After the pomp and circumstance that comes with the beginning of a bowl game, the Ags took little time to show they were here to play as Kellen Mond scampered around the tackle and sprinted through the secondary for a 62-yard touchdown. The players and the fans went wild as the Ags could not have had a better start. Unfortunately, the Wolf Pack answered by scoring the next 13 points and Mond struggled to find his groove.

But midway through the second quarter, Kellen found his favorite target

Jace Sternberger for a 28-yard gain and Trayveon Williams converted on two rushes to put the Aggies back on top 14-13, a lead they would never relinquish.

The Ags would add another score before halftime as Mond found Kendrick Rogers coming across the middle of the back of the end zone to give the team a 21-13 lead.

Texas A&M was without the services of Donovan Wilson and Otar Alaka who missed the bowl game because of injuries. Leon O'Neal Jr. and Buddy Johnson would be called on to fill their roles.

Just before the half Leon O'Neal Jr. stepped up and snagged a huge interception that shut down the Pack's drive and allowed the Ags to go into the locker room with the lead.

Tyrel Dodson made sure that any hope of an NC State comeback was squashed on their first possession of the third quarter as he intercepted Finley's pass and sprinted 78 yards for an Aggie touchdown.

The Aggies dominated the Pack in the second half as Trayveon Williams rushed for a total of 241 yards in the game to become the all-time rushing leader for one season in program history. Early in the fourth quarter he found a seam and raced 93 yards for a touchdown to put the game out of reach.

Jimbo had preached to this team that it wasn't just about winning but being able to dominate and finish off an opponent. The Aggie defense shut down the NC State passing attack and only allowed 134 yards on the ground. They stopped the Wolf Pack on their last-ditch effort on a fourth and two giving the Aggies the ball with just over 3 minutes to play.

Coach Fisher brought in the backups and Kwame Etwi got the Aggies down to the red zone. With time running down and the Aggies down to their last offensive play from the NC State 13-yard line the 12th Man, Cullen Gillaspia lined up in the backfield. He took the handoff broke a tackle and lunged over a defender to break the plane of the goal line and score the final touchdown. The crowd went wild and his teammates engulfed him on the sideline as he became the first 12th Man to score a touchdown.

It was the perfect ending to an amazing season! The Aggies showed up and had one of their best performances of the season. They moved up in the polls and finished #16 in the nation. They faced one of the toughest schedules in

the country under a first-year coach and played their hearts out all year.

The goals for this team are to win the SEC Championship, make it into the CFP playoffs and win a National Championship. This year Jimbo and his staff created a foundation to achieve those goals. The Aggies finished second in the toughest division in college football. Jimbo let them enjoy it after the win over LSU but reminded them, "This is the only time we will celebrate getting second."



Q&A

[ROB CHILDRESS]

TELL ME HOW THE FALL WENT AND WHAT YOU LEARNED ABOUT YOUR TEAM.

I thought the fall went incredibly well. Collectively, it may not look that way on the roster, but we feel like we have an older team with a lot of sophomores and juniors that have gotten a lot of baptism by fire, so to speak. They've come in and played an awful lot. So we feel like from a position player standpoint, we're quite a bit older. Albeit we lost some guys on the mound, we still have a lot of experience back. On the pitching side of things, we have nine left-handed pitchers that all throw 90 or better. Two in the front that are as good as any two lefthanders in the country when you are talking about John Doxakis and Asa Lacy. So that's a great place to start. The other experience back on the mound, guys like Chandler Jozwiak, Christian Roa, Dustin Saenz. Mason Cole is now a junior. Kyle Richardson is a veteran. So, we have a lot of veterans back that have worked and prepared and pitched like veterans. We do have some newcomers that are going to be exciting to watch and are going to carry a big load for us as well in Jonathan Childress. Moo Menefee is coming off Tommy John surgery that is close to being 100% healthy. Chris Weber, another true freshman, has got incredible pitch ability. Two junior college transfers in Bryce Miller and Kasey Kalich are going to be guys that are very important for us. So, I really like where we are at. But this is a hard time of the year (end of fall semester) you gotta tell 'em goodbye for about five and a half weeks before you get them back and we can't start practice or skill instruction until January 14th.

NO ONE IS MAKING YOU DO THIS, BUT IF YOU HAD TO WRITE DOWN A STARTING LINEUP TODAY BASED ON THE FALL WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE?

Well, you can put several guys in each photograph. That's what the fall is, is kind of a staging process and then it's about what are the guys willing to do over that six week period when they are on their own continuing to prepare and earn jobs. Behind the plate, Mikey Hoehner is a transfer from Cisco that had a great fall for us in every aspect. Hunter Coleman and Aaron Walters are two very mature bats that are going to have to find their way into the lineup, whether that's catching, playing at first base or playing a corner position in the outfield or defensive hitting. I feel like those guys all have got to hit three out of the four days in the week. At first base, Aaron Walters and Hunter Coleman are two guys that can move over there along with Will Frizzell. Will is going to play first base or DH for us. He's still not back at 100% from his knee injury from his surgery this summer. Second base Bryce Blaum, sat out last year as a transfer from Ole Miss. Just a great teammate, a great leader, an energy guy. Allonte Wingate is a senior, he does everything we ask him to do. Ty Coleman is a true freshman, he can really swing the bat, plays with a chip on his shoulder. At shortstop, we have Baden Shewmake. Third base we have a couple of seniors, Allonte Wingate would be an option over there along with Chandler Morris, two older guys. Hunter Watson is a true freshman who truly passes the eye test, he is 6'4 220 lbs. left-hand hitter and he's gonna find opportunities. In the outfield, we have quite a few options. You'd probably start with Logan Foster, who's a junior. He's hit just about every day since he has been here. You have Zach Deloach, Cam Blake is finally healthy and playing really well. Miko Rodriguez is a true freshman, a really good player. Jonathan Ducoff is a graduate transfer from Houston Baptist that has really been a shot in the arm for us, as far as who he is, his story, his work habits and obviously his performance, it comes down to that. About this time last year at HBU, he was diagnosed with leukemia and went through treatments all through the course of the spring and still found a way to hit about .270 with

9 home runs. He is here and in graduate school, just plays with a freedom, just a solid player and he's certainly gonna get to play quite a bit and we are very fortunate to have that guy here.

DID YOU LIKE HAVING THE EXHIBITION GAMES THIS FALL?

I did, especially the one at home. You know you get two weeks into the fall, you kind of get into a routine it gets a little bit stale. And to be able to do that and to have all the new guys feel what it's like to play a game and to runoff all the pregame just like a normal day. We had over 2,000 people in the stands and it felt like a real game. I think to get those butterflies out of the way and for the guys to feel that was important. And then to feel what a road trip is like and for us to go on the road and to know you have to create your own energy and find a way to do it yourself was important too. I think it's a positive for our sport that we get the opportunity to do that.



AS YOU KIND OF SCOUT THE LEAGUE, OBVIOUSLY, IT'S THE BEST CONFERENCE IN THE COUNTRY, WHO DO YOU THINK WILL BE THE TOP TEAMS IN THE SEC?

Well, you just look in the west, you gotta just hold your breath. Arkansas was one pop up from winning a national championship that has a lot of people back. LSU has everybody back. Mississippi State had an amazing run with a lot of people back. Ole Miss got their heart broke at home in a regional and have everyone back from the number one recruiting class that are now all juniors. Auburn had a great run into game three of a super regional and have a lot of pieces back. Alabama, Bohannon is one of the best recruiters in the country so I expect them to be a lot better. And that is just our division. When you look across the way I would expect South Carolina, Florida and Vanderbilt to be fighting for the top of that division. It's just a matter of going and playing good for ten weeks and trying to find a spurt in there that you play really good for four week period of time.

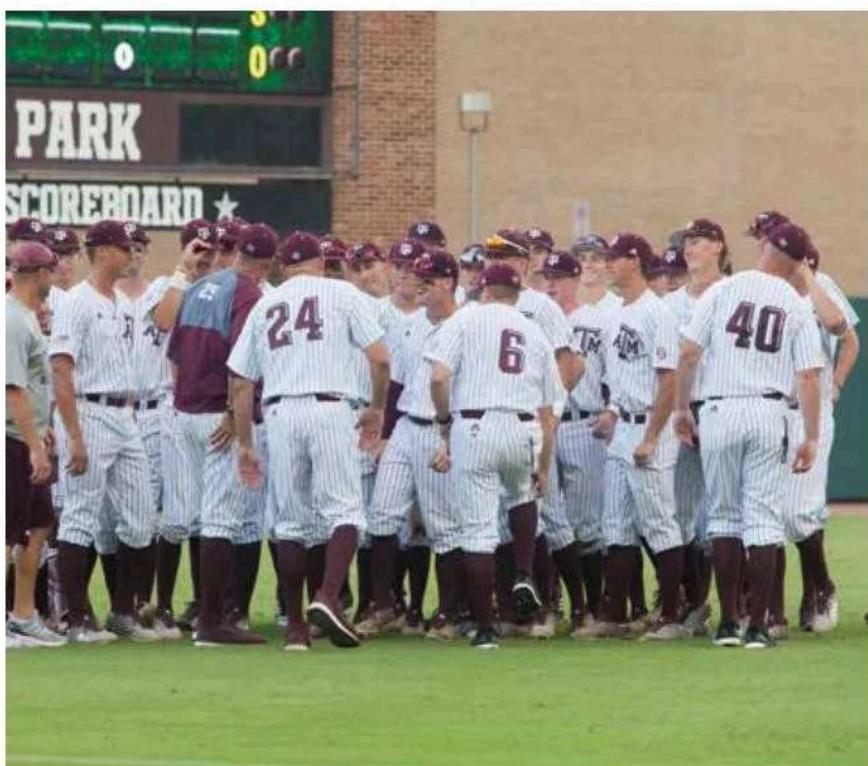
WHEN YOU ARE RECRUITING, OBVIOUSLY YOU'D LIKE TO GET THE BEST TALENT BUT HOW DO YOU BALANCE RECRUITING THE BEST PLAYERS THAT WON'T DECIDE TO GO PRO OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL.

Well, you have to do your homework and Justin Seely, I think is one of the premiere recruiting coordinators in the country. He does a great job of building relationships not just with the kids but with their parents as has done his due diligence with each kid as to what is his sign-ability and how important school is to him. You know we may take a flyer on one or two guys but you can't take a flyer on all these guys without doing your homework, you could be left with nothing come June. You know that's why Justin does such a great job sifting through all the information that he can, signing guys who want to show up and go to school and play in the best baseball conference in the country.

IF YOU WERE GOING TO COMPARE THIS YEAR'S CLUB WITH LAST YEAR'S CLUB AT THIS SAME TIME WHERE WOULD YOU SAY THIS YEAR'S TEAM IS AT?

I think we are a lot farther along offensively than we were a year ago on this date. Pitching wise the pieces are every bit if not better than last year but the experience is not the same and it's a matter of where are we going to put those pieces. You know at this time last year if you would have asked me who our closer was I wouldn't have said Nolan Hoffman is going to be an All American finishing games. So, coming from the back to the front that's the biggest unknowns. You know Mason Cole flashed some 95's, 96's, and 98's in the fall but can he go out and finish games with a one-run lead with 8,000 people in the stands on the road. Is Kasey Kalich gonna be that guy is Moo Menefee gonna be healthy and what role is he gonna be in? I mean when he is right, he's 92-95 with great presence and attack. Who's gonna be the number three guy on Sundays, who's gonna be our Tuesday guy, there a still a lot of unknowns that's why we tell the guys that the Fall is a staging process put

yourself in the photograph and then when you come back in January 14th when we start skill instruction be ready to rock we have a month to prepare. If a guy hits .400 in the fall but then goes 0-25 in January and February he's probably not gonna be in the lineup. But just like if a guy hit .180 in the fall but you see all of the pieces of a good player there and he comes back and has a great three weeks he's gonna find himself in the middle of everything. There are a lot of stories to have drawn from like Jonathan Moroney, we had planned on redshirting him at this point and he just went off in January and February he started opening day and never looked back. Nolan Hoffman is a great story. Just like Dustin Saenz, was a guy that last fall I would have said had a good chance to be in our rotation. He didn't do a lot over Christmas came back and got dinged and wasn't himself for $\frac{3}{4}$ of the year. That was an expensive experience. It took him a year to figure out that hey, me taking six weeks off during Christmas Break cost me a year. So, there are great things to learn from our guys in recent stories of success and failures.



Q&A

[JO EVANS]

HOW DID THE FALL GO? WHAT DID YOU LEARN ABOUT YOUR TEAM?

Well, we're really young and very inexperienced. It's a fun group, really hard working, good energy, really good team chemistry. I think the exciting thing is that there are so many open positions with people not returning. It's just given every person on the roster that feeling of, "Hey this is my shot. This is my opportunity to break into this lineup and to be a difference maker." It's been good. They've changed the rules you know. Before, you had certain weeks you could practice and play and you had certain weeks that are like eight-hour weeks. It used to be you only had two hours on the field with the players and now you can have four. So now four of those eight hours can be on the field, where before it was like six in the weight room and two on the field. It's been really nice to spend more time on the field with our players. We've got a lot of young talent. We bring in a transfer from UTSA, Ashlynn Walls, who's a shortstop. So she's come in and hit the ground running. Another transfer, Kendall Potts, who's a pitcher that played her undergrad at Baylor and had some injuries and didn't end up finishing playing there and now she's here. And then you have a group of really talented freshmen. It's been really fun to kind of see how all these pieces can potentially fit together.

IF YOU WERE GOING TO PUT A LINEUP TOGETHER TODAY, WHAT WOULD THAT LOOK LIKE?

So, we have four pitchers and every one of those pitchers will pitch in our games. We don't have a pitching staff where we've got two aces and then someone's going to be a middle reliever, a closer. All four of them have very different

skill sets. Which is great! I think you'll see us very much pitch by committee. You'll probably see very few seven-inning starts for anybody. Catching-wise we've got a freshman Haley Lee from Kingwood, who's very athletic, very talented, hits the long ball, throws the ball well. She's someone who is certainly going to have opportunities. Dani Elder is a sophomore, great receiver, really good receiver. Offensively we'll have to see how she can raise her game to get into our lineup. At first base it's kind of wide open. Payton McBride, you'll see play first base, she played first base all of her growing up years. You'll see her on the mound and at first base, which gives us a big leftie hitter in there. The infield is interesting because we don't have as much depth there and so you will see some new faces in there for sure. At second we have Kayla Garcia who's a kid out of Katy High School she's a freshman, lefty hitter righty thrower. Ashlynn Walls, who I mentioned before from UTSA, who played shortstop who could definitely play second for us. She's a lefty hitter. You got Riley Sartain who's always played third base for us and now could potentially play shortstop for us. So we have a combination where we could have Riley at short, Ashlynn at second or we could have Riley at third, Ashlynn at short. Baylee Klingler is a really great ball player, she's a freshman. She was on the USA Junior National Team. She was the youngest player to make that team and broke into their starting lineup. So she's someone that can hit, can hit the long ball, very athletic. You could see her play first or third or even potentially second. There are the pieces there and we will kind of wait to see what the right combination is. But you could very well see Baylee at third, Riley at short, Ashlynn at second at Payton McBride at first base. We've been working really hard defensively, it's a fun group to work with and any number of combinations we could go with there. Outfield Kelbi Fortenberry had a great sophomore year in terms of coming into her own. Ended up breaking into our starting lineup by the end of the season and postseason and we anticipate her starting in center field for us, another lefty hitter to put in our lineup. And then the two corner spots are wide open. So there will be people that maybe our fans are not familiar with. Gabby Moreno is a sophomore, she's a good hitter, she's played outfield

in her travel ball days. She could play one of those corner outfield spots. Blake-Ann Fritsch is a junior, one of our hardest workers, really a great teammate, I think her whole team would like to see her in the lineup. She's going to have an opportunity. There's a couple of freshmen on our squad that will have an opportunity to be out there. Kylie George is another sophomore. We are really young out there and we have lots of different options. It kind of remains to be seen who will have the maturity and who handles the pressure of being out there.

WHO ARE ONE OR TWO PLAYERS THAT REALLY STOOD OUT TO YOU AND IMPROVED THIS FALL?

Baylee Klingler really stood out. I think she's got a lot of talent and has a tremendous future here. Baylee could be one of our A&M marquee players. One of those players you see on one of those banners out there, she has the potential to be that player. Kelbi had a great fall. Riley, of course, had a great fall. Payton McBride on the mound was terrific, really just such great command of her pitches, great presence on the mound. So I'm excited about her. Those are the ones that kind of stand out.

I HATE TO BRING UP THE END OF LAST SEASON BECAUSE IT WAS HEARTBREAKING FOR US TO WATCH. YOU WERE A STRIKE AWAY FROM THE WORLD SERIES. WHAT CAN YOUR TEAM LEARN FROM THAT?

I think the biggest thing is just that resiliency we have and who we are. Like you said, being a strike away from playing in the World Series, and knowing we had some challenging times. You think about our first trip to Florida in the regular season and we didn't really compete. We got, we didn't really compete well at all. I mean we got swept at Florida. Then to go back there in the postseason with the kind of draw that we had and to be on their field and have every opportunity to win all three games. Just shows me what we are capable of, even in challenging times. And that's a message to our team. Ok, now we are a younger team. We are a team with less experience but remember what it felt like to go up against the giant on their field and put yourself in a situation and a position to play in the

College World Series. I think that says a lot about our program and our culture and I want our young players to know who they are. Like what they signed up for coming to A&M.

SO YOU GUYS ARE SETTLED INTO THE NEW FACILITY. BEFORE RECRUITING WAS TALKING ABOUT THE NEW FACILITY, NOW ITS BEING IN THE NEW FACILITY. HOW HAS THAT CHANGED THINGS FOR YOU?

It's like Christmas every day! I sit in my office I have a beautiful view of the field, of Davis Diamond. It just makes an impression an immediate impression a statement that there is a serious commitment to softball and to this program. As far a recruiting goes, we are so young in terms of how we recruit, so we've had recruits for a long time out there. So the kids that have committed to us have kind of been looking at the blueprint and now they are actually seeing it and walking through it and knowing someday this will be their home. I know that in the next few years this stadium will make a huge difference in recruiting. We'll have the opportunity to have this stadium on television to showcase our program because of this stadium, I think it's going to draw a lot of interest from kids out of state. We've always stayed pretty close to home and

we are kind of opening up our border so to speak with recruiting and really trying to draw just the best talent in the entire country. I think this stadium will do that.

YOU MENTIONED TEAM CHEMISTRY, HOW IMPORTANT IS THAT?

It's huge. When you don't have the experience, when you don't have the on-field SEC playing experience you better have a group that likes each other, loves each other wants to play hard for each other, will have each other's back on the days when it's not so easy. I think the team chemistry is really important all you have to do is go through times when the chemistry is off and that's when it really magnifies how important it is that the players get along, you know have a camaraderie and selflessness about them. And this group is like that. You know it's not easy losing Tori Vidales and Trinity Harrington and Lexi Smith and Erica Russell and you go down the list I mean it's a tough group to lose. The one thing that senior class did, they really cared about the program, they cared about the legacy that they would leave. They cared about leaving it better than they found it. That was a great class. That's something our young players can learn and sort of try to emulate.



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THE ULTIMATE CLUB

BY ROB HAVENS '88

One of the most fast-paced and unique sport clubs on campus is the Ultimate Club. Ultimate Frisbee combines aspects of football and basketball and transforms the sheer love of throwing a Frisbee into an athletic, brisk sport enjoyed by thousands around the world.

The A&M Ultimate Club began in 1994 and that year's team struggled to a 0-4 season, finishing 105th in the country. But since then, the team has gotten much better, earning five trips to the national tournament including a 2017 appearance.

The game takes place on a football field that is 40 yards across and 70 yards long with 25-yard end zones. The goal is to move the Frisbee down the field by throwing and catching it and finally scoring a point with a catch in the end zone. Seven players from each team are on the field at one time. Players are not

allowed to run with the disc but can pivot, like in basketball, before throwing the Frisbee.

For the most part, Ultimate is a non-contact sport. Another unique aspect is that the games are self-officiated, with players using the spirit of the game to guide them. Observers are there to resolve any difference of opinions on foul/no foul scenarios.

The game can be physically taxing as players competing in tournaments may average 12 miles in a day, running around making plays. Players are required to stretch and drink pickle juice to prevent cramping over a weekend.

The players have ten seconds to throw the Frisbee between plays. If it is not caught or is dropped, it is the other team's possession. The first team to 13 (or 15, in some cases) wins the game.

Ultimate tournaments typically consist of seven to eight games over a weekend, with pool play on Saturday and bracket play on Sunday. The teams are ranked throughout the season and the top 20 teams advance to nationals.

Currently, the club has around 70 members divided into an A team and a

B team, "Dozen" and "Dozen Matter," a play on words of the 12th Man. Most of the members have previous experience, but they welcome students who have never played before.

Club president Nicolas Lanas said he joined the team because he loves Ultimate Frisbee. "I really enjoy playing the game itself, as well as being around some of the most amazing teammates/friends you could ever have," Lanas said. "The culture we have as a team spreads nothing but positivity and camaraderie on and off the field."



THE BASEBALL CLUB

BY ROB HAVENS '88

Did you know there is more than one championship winning baseball team on the campus of Texas A&M? The Aggie Baseball Club team won a conference championship and a regional championship and became a Club Baseball World Series finalist last season.

The Baseball Club started in 2000, allowing players who had played baseball their entire lives to continue competing in college. Baseball is still considered America's game, and players like club president Dalton Warren wanted to continue to play the game they love. Dalton told us, "I joined the club to be

surrounded by great teammates and continue playing baseball, a game that means a lot to me."

The team typically competes against conference and non-conference teams in three-game series on the weekends. Their main conference rival is Texas State, and their main rivals in the region are Texas Tech and Baylor.

This spring the Aggies will play Texas Tech the weekend of February 9th, Texas State the weekend of February 16th, and UTSA the weekend of March 23rd.

The team practices together twice a week, but they encourage their members to get some work in throughout the

week as time allows. The best players, according to Warren, are the ones with a passion for the game and a work ethic that allows them to make time to better themselves even with a crazy school schedule.

This fall, the team was fortunate enough to win the 10th anniversary Wood Wars tournament in Euless. They won back-to-back conference championships in 2017 and 2018.

We asked Dalton about his favorite thing about being on the team and he replied, "The bonds and friendships that are formed between players. The best thing about being president of the club is striving to make our team better and seeing our team achieve great things."

The team is mostly funded by membership dues and Texas A&M Sport Clubs, but they do fundraise throughout the year as well.

Dalton told us that his best experiences since joining the club are the out-of-state van rides to the World Series and New Orleans. "They may be long, but with a team like ours they are never boring!"



Visit recsports.tamu.edu for more info about Texas A&M Sport Clubs.

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